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3) JCP calls for unconditional removal of Futenma air base in both Houses

AKAHATA (Page 2) (Excerpts)
February 4, 2010

In a Diet session, Japanese Communist Party (JCP) Chairman Shii called for the unconditional withdrawal of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa, touching on the historical significance of the outcome of the Nago mayoral election. In the

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election, the candidate opposed to the existing relocation plan was elected. Shii's call had the power to overwhelm the House.

Shii said: "The Okinawan people have been living in fear of U.S. soldiers and possible accidents, and have been exposed to danger. The government should stop imposing such suffering on the Okinawan people under the pretext of deterrence. ... Marines are not needed in Okinawa and in Japan."

Defining the conditional return of the base as "an irresponsible and servile approach," Secretariat Head Ichida also criticized the argument for the continued presence of the base in the context of deterrence.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said: "It is impossible from a realistic point of view" to remove the base without condition, indicating the stance of sticking to the idea of returning the base conditionally, without providing any reason. Hatoyama also said: "The presence of Marines has worked effectively to deter enemies from invading Japan" and masked the fact that the Marine Corps is "an invasive force" as "an assault unit."

4) Guam visit set for Feb. 10-11

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
February 4, 2010

The "Okinawa Base Issues Review Committee," a panel of the government and the ruling parties to discuss where to relocate the U.S. military's Futenma airfield facility from its current location in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture, met yesterday and decided to visit Guam on Feb. 10-11. During their visit to Guam, panel members will visit Andersen Air Force Base and will also observe joint training to be conducted around that time by the Air Self-Defense Force and U.S. forces.

"They will visit there to see the airbase and its environs since 8,000 troops will be moved (from the U.S. Marine Corps in Okinawa in the process of realigning the U.S. military presence in Japan)," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano told a press conference yesterday when asked about the purpose of the panel's planned visit to Guam. Hirano thus indicated that the panel's Guam visit is not premised on regarding Guam as a candidate location for the Futenma relocation. The panel will start full-fledged discussions after returning home from its Guam visit.

5) Next month's return of Okinawa air control uncertain

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)
February 4, 2010

The U.S. Kadena Air Base's radar approach control or RAPCON for short, a system controlling the air traffic of airspace over Okinawa's main island and its environs, is expected to be off the agenda for a meeting today of the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee due to the United States' own circumstances. The bilateral committee was

expected to make a formal decision on returning RAPCON to Japan on March 11. "This might be revenge for the Futenma issue," a Japanese government official noted.

Japan and the United States concurred in 2004 on transferring RAPCON within a timeframe of about three years. However, its return has

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been delayed and the two countries agreed over again in January 2008 to transfer RAPCON this March.

Late last year, the Office of the Secretary of Defense at the U.S. Department of Defense instructed the headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan through the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Pacific Command to coordinate with its Japanese counterparts on the procedures for the return of RAPCON. Thereafter, USFJ Commander Rice reported on the progress of coordination. However, there was no response from the Pentagon by yesterday, according to sources.

The Foreign Ministry and the Land, Infrastructure and Transport Ministry have requested the U.S. Department of Defense and USFJ headquarters proceed to transfer RAPCON. However, USFJ headquarters said there was no instruction from the Pentagon. As it stands, the outlook for procedures remains unclear.

The Kadena base's return of RAPCON has been set for March 11, a day when the aeronautical information publication is to be revised in an internationally unified 28-day cycle. However, its return will be further delayed should the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee fail to agree by mid-February on its return.

6) METI to introduce subsidy program to attract eco-friendly businesses from abroad

ASAHI (Page 5) (Excerpts)
February 4, 2010

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has decided to set up a new government-funded system to offer subsidies and low-interest loans with the aim of wooing environmentally-friendly businesses from overseas. Anticipating high growth in the environment industry, the U.S. and European countries have already stepped up their efforts to bring in foreign firms by providing subsidies. The new program is also intended to prevent an outflow of Japanese companies.

The government earmarked approximately 30 billion yen in subsidies for the new program in the second supplementary budget for fiscal 2009. For investment in plants and equipment to create low-carbon products in an effort to prevent global warming, up to 5 billion yen will be subsidized for each investment case. Lithium batteries for electric cars and light-emitting diodes (LED) are included among the low-carbon products. The condition for receiving subsidies that the output of targeted products at a new plant is boosted to over 1.5 times more than the total amount of domestic shipments (in fiscal 2008) of the product. It is unprecedented for the government to offer subsidies for corporate capital investment.

7) Expanded eco-car subsidy program to cover eight U.S. models

YOMIURI (Page 9) (Full)
February 4, 2010

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) on Feb. 3 announced 43 imported car models that have been included in the government's eco-car subsidy program as a result of its easing the conditions for the program. Of the 43 models, European cars account for 35 models from 10 brands. Only eight models from five U.S. brands, such as Cadillac and Hummer have been included despite strong requests from the U.S. government. No U.S. cars were eligible

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for the program before the introduction of the eased measures. Japan imported 800 units of those eight models in 2009. The government

eased the conditions for the program on Jan. 19, after taking criticism from the U.S. Under the eased conditions, vehicles whose fuel efficiency was measured in the country of origin are also eligible for the subsidy program if the measurement is done using the prescribed method.

8) Foreign Minister Okada: In-depth talks necessary for Japan-China friendship

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 4, 2010

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada met yesterday with the Japanese members of the New Japan-China Friendship 21st Century Committee comprised of experts from Japan and China. During the meeting, Okada said, "It would be good for you to hold in-depth discussion" in order to deepen the friendship between the two countries. After replacing the panel members, the new committee will hold its first meeting in Beijing on Feb. 7.

9) Environment Ministry's draft calls for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from households by up to 31 PERCENT to attain 25 PERCENT -cut goal

ASAHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)
February 4, 2010

The Environment Ministry yesterday revealed a draft roadmap intended to be used as a guide to attain the nation's mid-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25 PERCENT from 1990 levels (by 30 PERCENT from 2005 levels) by 2020. The government plans to finalize the roadmap in March. Of the 25 PERCENT, the draft notes that emissions should be cut by 15 PERCENT to 25 PERCENT through domestic measures. In the household section, from which emissions have been increasing, METI calls for reducing emissions by 18 PERCENT to 31 PERCENT from 1990 levels or by 40 PERCENT to 49 PERCENT from 2005 levels.

Environment Minister Sakihito Ozawa presented the draft plan in a meeting yesterday of a senior vice minister-level study team tasked with working out measures to contain global warming. The ministry drafted the plan based on the estimates made by the National Institute for Environmental Studies.

10) Prime Minister's replies in Feb. 3 question-and-answer session at House of Councillors

YOMIURI (Page 13) (Excerpts)
February 4, 2010

Major points of the Prime Minister's replies:

Q Continued use of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station must be avoided.

Q Efforts will be made to submit to the Diet a bill to set up a human rights relief organization.

& Futenma relocation issue

The outcome of the mayoral election in Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, is a manifestation of popular will. In view of the dangerous situation

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at Futenma Air Station, a relocation site must be found as soon as possible. We must prevent the base from remaining in the current location permanently. Alleviating the burden is a desperate wish of the people in Okinawa. I will determine where to relocate the Futenma base by the end of May, seeking the understanding of municipal governments and the United States. Returning Futenma without a replacement facility is impossible in reality.

& Japan-U.S.-China relations

The United States and Japan are allies that share basic values. The Japan-U.S. alliance is a cornerstone for Japan to enhance its cooperative relations with other Asian countries, including China. I do not subscribe to the idea of striking a balance between the

Japan-U.S. relationship and the Japan-China relationship.

& Human rights relief organization

There seems to be no end to human rights problems, including discrimination, in Japan, and there are many victims. We will make efforts to present to the Diet at an early date a bill intended to set up a human rights relief organization independent from the government.

& Economic and fiscal management

From a long-term perspective, we will turn Japan from a centrally governed state to a state of local autonomy. Efforts helping local areas to have independent revenue sources will help the country create a path to restoring fiscal health. An economic recovery will create jobs for small and medium-sized enterprises. We will extend support for research and development and the development of markets, giving a boost to small and medium-sized companies that are eager to develop new businesses.

& Postal reform

Convenience for the people really matters. We will make utmost efforts to make the post office more cherished than ever before.

11) Prosecutors to decide not to indict DPJ Secretary General Ozawa today; Ozawa to continue to serve as secretary general

ASAHI (Top play) (Abridged)
February 4, 2010

The Special Investigation Division (SID) of the Tokyo District Prosecutors Office has officially decided not to indict Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa in connection with the land deal involving his political fund management organization Rikuzan-kai. The SID had been considering dropping the case against Ozawa due to insufficient evidence. It will now make the final decision after consulting with top prosecutors. Meanwhile, when asked on Feb. 3 about his response if Ozawa is not indicted, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said: "I would like him to work as secretary general," indicating his intention for Ozawa to keep his job. This was in response to questions from reporters at the Prime Minister's Official Residence.

Reporters asked Hatoyama: "Will Secretary General Ozawa keep his job?" Hatoyama replied: "I am not thinking of any personnel changes right now," indicating that he will not replace the secretary

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general. To the question: "Do you want Secretary General Ozawa to take charge of the House of Councillors election?" He stated emphatically: "Of course, definitely."

12) National Public Service Act amendment bill to allow reassignment of senior bureaucrats at prime minister's request, facilitate demotion of vice ministers

MAINCHI (Top play) (Excerpts)
February 4, 2010

Yoshitaka Koyama

The contents of the draft bill to amend the National Public Service Act became known on Feb. 3. The bill will have a provision stating that the prime minister can ask cabinet ministers to reassign officials at the rank of department directors general and above "for the purpose of implementing the cabinet's important policies." It will codify a mechanism to allow the intent of the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) to be reflected directly in the appointment of senior bureaucrats. Furthermore, administrative vice ministers will be regarded as the same rank as bureau directors general, thus facilitating their demotion. All of these steps allow for flexibility in reassigning bureaucrats, in order to promote policymaking led by politicians or by the Kantei. The draft bill thus reveals the outline of the "new personnel system for senior

bureaucrats" included in the (Democratic Party of Japan's) manifesto for the last House of Representatives election.

The draft bill states: "When the prime minister or the chief cabinet secretary judges that it is necessary to appoint appropriate officials for the implementation of important policies of the cabinet, he can consult the appointing officers (ministers, for instance) on the appointment or dismissal of senior bureaucrats." On the other hand, the appointing officers are asked to "consult with the prime minister and the chief cabinet secretary in advance" when appointing or dismissing senior bureaucrats.

The bill also stipulates that vice ministers "are regarded as of the same grade" as bureau directors general in the government's organizational structure. They are exempted from the provision of the National Public Service Act that demotion is only possible in cases of "failure to meet performance standards."

13) National Referendum Law not to allow voting from age 18

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top play) (Lead paragraph)
February 3, 2010

The government gave up on Feb. 3 on allowing citizens from age 18 to vote under the National Referendum Law that stipulates the procedures for constitutional revision that will take effect on May 18 and decided to allow voting only from age 20 for the time being. This is because it has become evident that there will not be sufficient time to amend the Public Office Election Law to extend voting rights to 18-year-olds and other civil laws to lower the legal age to 18, which are required to allow voting by citizens from age 18 under the Referendum Law.

14) DPJ decides to expand non-government lawmakers' involvement in decision-making processes

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ASAHI (Page 4) (Abridged slightly)
February 4, 2010

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) plans to significantly increase non-government lawmakers' involvement in decision-making processes. The plan is to decide on the core members for each ministry's policy council composed of the lawmakers holding the three top posts and part of the Diet and party executives, to let them discuss priority issues, and to let the DPJ deputy secretaries general coordinate views on mid- and long-term policy issues with the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei). This will be a fundamental shift from the Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa-led policy of the government's unified control of policies.

According to the items confirmed at the Feb. 1 DPJ executive meeting that Ozawa also attended, the core members of each ministry's policy council will be composed of directors of the concerned committees of the two houses of the Diet, executives of the Diet affairs committee, officers of the Upper House policy council, and others, in addition to the parliamentarians holding the top three posts. The three deputy secretaries general will coordinate views with the Kantei on long-term strategies and major national policy issues, such as the environment and the National Defense Program Guidelines.

Regarding deliberations on legislation, the party has also decided to accept requests from concerned organizations at workshops to be held by each committee in the Diet.

15) Hatoyama promises to submit quickly bill setting up human rights monitoring body

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 4, 2010

In response to Democratic Party of Japan member Toru Matsuoka's question about the possibility of the government establishing an independent organization to monitor human rights in order to prevent

human-rights-related violations and discrimination, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said yesterday at a plenary session of the House of Councillors: "It is a very important idea. I promise you to make efforts so that we will be able to submit a bill (aimed at the establishment of such a panel) as quickly as possible."

16) DPJ to review manifesto (campaign pledges)

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
February 4, 2010

Shinichi Sekine

In preparation for the House of Councillors election this summer, the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) decided yesterday to review its manifesto (campaign pledges) for last year's House of Representatives election. The focus will be on whether to provide the full amount of child allowances from 2011 and whether to abolish the current provisional rates for gasoline and other road-related taxes. The DPJ will draw up a new manifesto as well as a roadmap for the next four years.

The taskforce team, set up in mid-January, will look into its manifesto for the Upper House election. Considering that the party

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will come under criticism from the public if it just modifies its manifesto, one senior party member said, "We will come up with new policy measures." Specific measures for "a new form of public sector," which Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama advocated in his policy speech, will likely become the main topic for consideration.

Asked about this development in the DPJ at a press conference yesterday, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano said: "The manifesto for the Upper House election campaign should be handled mainly by the party. If their move is related to policies, the government should be involved in it. But with regard to election affairs, the party should be in charge."

17) Coordination of views on review of upper limit of savings at Japan Post Bank making little headway

YOMIURI (Page 9) (Excerpts)
February 4, 2010

Coordination of views on a review of the postal service privatization plan is facing difficulty. While the government and the ruling camp are calling for scrapping the upper limit of savings at Japan Post Bank, the major focus of the review, the financial services industry is calling on the government to maintain the present conditions. State Minister for Postal Reform Kamei intends to submit a postal reform draft bill (tentative name) as early as early next week. However, it is unclear whether the bill will include specifics.

The upper limit of savings at Japan Post Bank is 10 million yen at present. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the People's New Party (PNP) have agreed on a policy of easing the upper limit.

The DPJ is looking into scrapping the limit entirely so as to enhance the freedom of the management of the bank. The SDP and the PNP want to raise the level of the limit from the current 10 million yen to 30 million yen. On Feb. 3, the PNP indicated a stance of compromising on the DPJ's plan, discussing the possibility of abolishing the savings limit.

On the other hand, the financial services industry remains opposed to the idea of raising the upper limit. Their stance is that if the upper limit is raised while government involvement in the bank is left intact, it would squeeze the operations of private banks.

The government wants to enhance the freedom of financial services by Japan Post Bank, by such means as scrapping the upper limit of savings at Japan Post Bank, based on the assessment that expanding profits from financial services would be indispensable to secure the

cost of mandating Japan Post's three businesses - Japan Post Service, Japan Post Bank and Japan Post Insurance - to offer uniform services throughout the nation.

However, many observers are concerned about the idea of raising or scrapping the upper limit. Since Japan Post Bank lacks experience in managing its funds in areas other than in government bonds, it may not be able to invest its increased funds successfully. Should that happen, the increased burden of interest payments could squeeze its profits. Moreover, there is even a possibility of the bank incurring massive losses as a result of failing to make profits in its investments.

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18) Japan Post Bank should invest its funds in U.S. Treasury bonds, state minister for financial affairs and postal reform says

ASAHI (Page 5) (Full)
February 4, 2010

State Minister for Financial Affairs and Postal Reform Shizuka Kamei on Feb. 3 indicated his view that Japan Post Bank of the Japan Post Group should purchase U.S. Treasury bonds or corporate debentures to diversify its fund management. Kamei's stance is that the destinations for investment by Japan Post Bank should be expanded, as the Bank's funds will likely increase in view of the ongoing deliberations on raising the upper limit of postal savings as part of the efforts to review the postal privatization plan.

Concerning a review of the postal privatization plan, Kamei told the press corps, "Japan Post Bank is now fettered by many regulations in its operations. I will reform it so that it will match with reality." Noting that the outstanding savings balance at Japan Post Bank, which stood at roughly 180 trillion yen as of the end of December last year, will likely increase, Kamei said, "I think investment in areas other than Japanese government bonds, such as U.S. Treasury bonds, will increase a little more."

Japan Bank invested roughly 180 trillion yen in securities as of the end of December last year. Nearly 90 percent of its funds have been invested in Japanese government bonds. The Bank has purchased very few U.S. Treasury bonds. Investment in corporate debentures stands at only about 12 trillion yen.

19) LDP's Tanigaki criticizes "DPJ's amateurish diplomacy"

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
February 4, 2010

Liberal Democratic Party President Sadakazu Tanigaki has written an essay highlighting the stance of attaching importance to the Japan-U.S. alliance. The essay is apparently intended to heighten the LDP's position as the largest opposition party by presenting a counterproposal to the current administration, which is wavering over the issue of the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station.

The essay will appear in the monthly magazine Chuokoron that will go on sale on Feb. 10.

In his essay titled "Amateurish diplomacy by the Democratic Party of Japan," Tanigaki criticizes the Hatoyama administration's diplomacy, writing, "The administration is trying to keep a distance from the United States while moving closer to China to strike a balance. This is amateur diplomacy that lacks understanding of national security." He also writes about the Futenma issue: "Moving the base outside Japan is impractical in that it will end up reducing deterrence. Moving the base out of Okinawa is also simplistic. It is tantamount to toying with the sentiments of the people in Okinawa. The existing Japan-U.S. agreement is the best option."

ROOS